

Happiness Pony

happinesspony.com

Liberté, Égalité, Worcesterité.

August 2012



Amanda Kidd Schall
art from bicycles
amandakiddschall.com

Dancing in the Dark
Z convinced me that there are two versions of Bruce Springsteen's song "Dancing in the Dark": the sermon on anxiety and loneliness that Springsteen wrote, and the up-tempo anthem Springsteen recorded.

When Z was young, he played the song loud, with a full backing band, so we could shout along at house parties and cramped venues, each chorus a celebration of youth and love and Springsteen. Later in life he played the song on a lone acoustic guitar, the band gone, the tempo slow, and Z no longer praising youth and love, as genetics and chemical imbalances began to strip those from him before he turned 25.

Springsteen found fame and wealth long before he wrote this song. When was the last time he looked in a mirror and wanted to more than superficially change his clothes, his hair, his face?

Z sang the lyrics of "Dancing in the Dark" with the frustration and restlessness that Springsteen carved into his notebook, but with harmonies that the E Street Band could never find, because the singer and the protagonist came from the same place, both of them anxious and lonely and unable to shake this world off their shoulders. (Jeremy Shulkin)

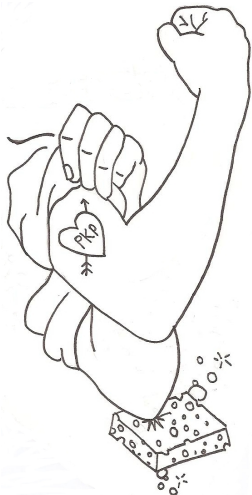


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The Worcester Necronomicon

One of the more notable independent Worcester libraries at present is the HX, based around that portion of the old Firecracker collection that survived the Stone Soup fire. Other singular volumes have been added since. One of these, of unknown origins and discovered buried deep in the stacks by a surprised librarian, is the so-called Worcester Necronomicon.

Physically, it is cleverly disguised as the angtsy diary of an unidentified, magic-obsessed teenager, copied into the sort of blank book that might be purchased in the occult section of a Barnes & Noble. Inside, it is the journal of a young adept, in the tradition of Merlin and Ged, coming into his full potential. Alternating tormented diary entries and elaborate diagrams, this budding disciple of Aleister Crowley, Lovecraftian pulp fiction, and professional wrestling pours his essence into the encyclopædic masterpiece, replete with references to mystic dimensions and "psy-vamps." At times his occult genius invents whole new systems of biological mysticism, as in his schematic of hand and foot chakras.

The careful reader who compares the table of contents with the text itself finds several sections missing, including the final section, titled "Reality Shattering," seemingly ripped out but more likely sucked directly into the underworld as each page was completed.

All this between Hot Topic Gothic covers, disguised as thoroughly as any holy grail against the unworthy curiosity-seekers of our and future generations. (Asa Needle and Mike Benedetti. Drawing by Aiden Duffy.)



True Action Tales of Worcester: Matoonas Chapter One: Before the War

Horrawanonit was sagamore (leader) of the Nipmucks on Pakachoag Hill (future site of Holy Cross), in the region of Quinsigamond. Matoonas, also among the Pakachoag, was a man of some standing, and he too was there when the English proposed a new order.

The colonists offered an alliance, goods, and skills. In return they asked for land, and that the tribe be baptized into a new religion. What would the Pakachoag decide?

The tribe had been decimated by disease. They were challenged by surrounding tribes who raided their village for tribute. European colonists now outnumbered natives in New England.

The Pakachoag chose alliance.

On September 17, 1674, two men, Rev. John Eliot and Daniel Gookin, a representative of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, arrived to formalize the arrangement. On a previous visit, Gookin had purchased 64 square miles of land with a down payment of two blanket coats and four yards of cloth.

That September day, Horrawanonit and the other Nipmuc leaders chose Matoonas as "constable," keeper of English law among the people.

It may have seemed the beginning of a peaceful, if strange, new era. But the future would be one of blood and betrayal. (to be continued)



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Book Review

Jonathan Lethem's "They Live"

John Carpenter's mind-breaking 1988 science fiction film *They Live* is as relevant now as when it was released, though for different reasons. This is the film that inspired the HOPE on the Obama poster, that gave us the line about being here to "chew bubblegum and kick ass," that visually presaged the Occupy spectacle of midnight police demolitions of homeless encampments full of radical activists.

Lethem's book-length, minute-by-minute commentary will be a joy to anyone who loves this film. He celebrates the classically beautiful parts, complains about the half-assed parts, and enjoys trying to wrap his mind around their being parts of the same film. "No offense," he writes, "but *They Live* is probably the stupidest film ever to take ideology as its explicit subject. It's also probably the most fun." (Mike Benedetti)

HX Library



Burnt books from across the city. Science fiction & unconventional politics. Across from Diamond Chevrolet. Moving to Stone Soup in October.

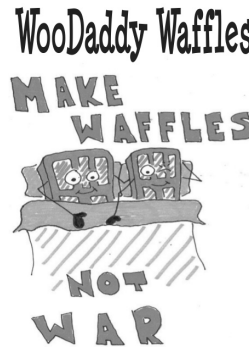
Zine Review

Because the Boss Belongs to Us: Queer Femmes on Bruce Springsteen

Some of the queer femme authors of essays in this zine love Bruce Springsteen. Others love straight men (fathers, brothers) who love Bruce Springsteen, or whose lives they hear in Springsteen songs. Others don't care much about Springsteen, and their essays are terrible, but there's really only one of those, thank goodness. This straight man loves this zine because of the way Bruce's music and these authors' essays connect us all together, people who are not supposed to connect around any of this stuff, but do. (Mike Benedetti)

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Learning to Drive
My friend Sophia and her adorable child Ezra have been giving me driving lessons in their light blue car. Sometimes we talk about things like banana bread or feminist political ecology or who we think is cute, but a lot of times we talk only about driving. Sophia yells at me: “Pedal to the metal, girl! Forty miles an hour! Do it!” I do my best. We haven’t gotten into any accidents yet. We are hoping to remain accident-free, though we are far from mistake-free. How would I learn otherwise?

I hesitate when pulling out of side streets onto busier streets. “One fish, two fish, red fish, blue fish,” Sophia chants as we turn our heads from left to right, assessing the potential for a vehicle to come whipping around the corner and collide with us, deciding if it is safe to venture out. Ezra asks for chocolate ice cream, and is assured that chocolate ice cream is on the agenda. When backing up and trying to park, I feel like I am about to hit something—the curb, that bush, another car. “When in doubt, chicken out,” Sophia says helpfully. What does “driving defensively” really mean? This is what it means: When in doubt, chicken out.

My first driving instructor, JB, took me driving on quiet roads and then busier roads. She was an excellent teacher, patient and full of suggestions. Sophia kicked it up a notch: we drove on Route 9, drove to neighboring towns, merged lanes, drove on windy windy roads to practice steering and “riding the yellow line.” Merging was nervewracking. Driving in traffic is hectic—so much to keep track of. My mother says that her mother, my Bubbe, said that all you need to do is to be able to fit a piece of paper between you and the next car. Terrifying. (Callista Perry)



If I could be anything in the world,

I would be Bruce Springsteen’s car. Listen to him in the opening stanza of “Open All Night”:

*Well I had the carburetor, baby, cleaned and checked
With her line blown out she’s hummin’ like a turbojet
Propped her up in the backyard on concrete blocks
For a new clutch plate and a new set of shocks
Took her down to the carwash, check the plugs and points
Well, I’m goin’ out tonight, I’m gonna rock that joint.*

Oh how I’d love to be up on his concrete blocks.

I’d never really learned how to drive, but I’m a terrific passenger; after spelling things correctly, being driven around is probably what I’m best at. In 17 years in New York, a city where nobody has a car, all of my significant relationships have been with drivers. When I met her in 2002, E. had a hot black little Toyota Supra, standard transmission, watching her downshift turned me inside out. About eight months in, we acknowledged that neither of us could do anything but each other, I quit my job, we both sold everything, packed our lives into that Supra and took I-40 across to California. From Nashville, Oklahoma City, Flagstaff, Needles, she drove me wild. It took me five years to extricate myself from that particular front seat, and I don’t regret the ride. I know I’d probably take more trips if I was a switch, liked to take the wheel. But I don’t mind waiting out my stretches of metaphorical dark highway, my private New Jersey Turnpikes. Springsteen’s plenty of company on my radio, hey ho rock n roll deliver me from nowhere. (Emily Drabinski. Creative Commons BY-NC-ND 2.0 licensed. From the zine “Because the Boss Belongs to Us: Queer Femmes on Bruce Springsteen.”)



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HAPPINESS PONY Income Statement July 2012

Revenue	
Donations from editors	\$79.21
Ad sales	\$0.00
Other donations	\$0.00

Expenses	
500 copies	\$77.21
Test copies	\$2.00

Net Income	\$0.00
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Happiness Pony is a free monthly newspaper published in Worcester, Massachusetts. This issue was edited by Jen Burt, Asa Needle, & Mike Benedetti.

editor@happinesspony.com

To All Those Who Have Cried in an Important Meeting

This is for everyone who cried in an
important meeting
And was told it was unprofessional
by the looks of disdain
That grief is not on the agenda
It is to be felt in public hallways or
bathrooms
you rush to when it all gets to be
too much
But not behind these closed doors
where the whiteboard dictates
This is a space for action items
Which are really power tools
That grief is something that is for
family,
for funerals, for people
For people who are buried
underground
Not for those who never were what
you thought
Grief is not something you feel for
buildings
for dreams dead or the justice that
hasn’t come
for communities whose roots are
rotting
This is for everyone who cried
during an important meeting
i have sobbed in the centers of

universities, in the YMCA,
in public hearings, triple deckers,
and the woods
across the street,
outside a theatre in Chicago
listening to a voicemail
from the meeting i missed
This is for everyone who has cried
in an important meeting
For everyone who hasn’t but let it
tear out their insides instead
For all of us who went back and
refused to be made
the oddity for feeling
Who put feelings on the agenda
Who made caring an action item
These tears are not a sign of
victimhood but strength
And with my feet on the ground i
remember the
whole world holds me up
But really it is those who will hold
me when i go home
who say i am proud of you simply
for speaking
This is for everyone who cried
during an important meeting
We are the ones who feel too much
they say

“don’t let it get to you”
i fear the day when it doesn’t get to
me
when i sit there and move through
the motions
taking notes that never reflect the
mood
consenting to proposals that never
acknowledge the underlying
This is for the day when it all
changes
This is for never stopping believing
it can
Despite having given it our all
Not just our minds and time but
our hearts
and watching it fail
To the day when we cry in a
meeting out of joy
To the day when we cry in a
meeting and everyone stops
and holds us and we don’t move
until we all can
Sometimes i see glimpses of this
day
and this is what gets me through
those meetings

(Jen Burt)